

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system for providing incentive for a user of said system to access content over a network, comprising:

a user node responsive to a browser program for providing communication between a user and said network, said user node being in communication with a user interface device for depicting a character icon to the user;

a subscriber advertiser node for providing connection of content to said network, said content comprising character icon enhancement authorization; and

a service provider server in communication with the user node and the subscriber advertiser node for effectuating a function on the user interface device pertaining to the character icon when an enhancement content corresponding to said character icon enhancement authorization is accessed.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein the character icon is provided to the user interface device by said service provider server.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein the character icon enhancement content comprises a means for animating the character icon on the user interface device.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein the character icon enhancement content comprises a means for broadcasting sound on the user interface device.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein said subscriber advertiser node comprises a plurality of subscriber advertiser nodes.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein the enhancement content is contained on said service provider server.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the enhancement content is transferred from said subscriber advertiser node to said service provider server upon access of said character icon enhancement authorization.

8. The system of claim 1, wherein the character icon has an associated characteristic and wherein said function corresponds to said associated characteristic.

9. The system of claim 1, wherein said character icon enhancement authorization comprises a code represented by a visible icon on the user interface device when the user interface device is in communication with said service provider server.

10. The system of claim 1, wherein said character icon authorization code comprises a code represented by an invisible icon which is discoverable on the user interface device while the user interface device is in communication with said service provider server and upon performing an action on the user interface device.

11. The system of claim 9, wherein said character icon enhancement authorization is accessible to a user of the user interface device upon satisfying a condition.

12. The system of claim 10, wherein said character icon enhancement authorization is accessible to a user of the user interface device upon satisfying a condition.

13. The system of claim 11, wherein said condition comprises one of selecting and entering on the user interface device a correct response to a query presented in the content provided by said subscriber advertiser node to the user interface device.

14. The system of claim 1, wherein said character icon represents certain interests and information of the user and wherein said content further comprises content corresponding to the certain interests and information.

15. The system of claim 9, wherein the character icon enhancement authorization comprises a routing function for directing the browser program to a second subscriber advertiser node upon access of the character icon enhancement authorization.

16. The system of claim 10, wherein the character icon enhancement authorization comprises a routing function for directing the browser program to a second subscriber advertiser node upon access of the character icon enhancement authorization.

17. A method for providing incentive for a user viewing content over a network, comprising the steps of:

establishing a first network connection between a user interface device and a service provider server;

providing data in the form of a character icon representation to the user interface device over said first network connection;

establishing a second network connection between the user interface device and a content provider, said content provider providing data comprising an enhancement authorization code to the user interface device over said second network connection;

accessing said enhancement authorization code from the user interface device;

notifying said service provider server when said enhancement authorization code has been accessed; and

communicating a command over said first network connection in response to said notifying step to cause a function to be performed on the user interface device.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein said step of providing data comprises the steps of the user registering with a service provider operating the service provider server for providing user preference information to the service provider.

19. The method of claim 17, wherein the character icon is capable of being controlled by character-specified enhancements accessed by corresponding enhancement access codes.

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20. The method of claim 19, further comprising the step of determining, before said notifying step, whether the character icon is authorized to access said enhancement authorization code.

21. The method of claim 17, wherein said function provides animation of the character icon.

22. The method of claim 17, wherein said function provides an audio signal for broadcast on the user interface device.

23. The method of claim 20, wherein said function provides animation of the character icon on the user interface device.

24. The method of claim 20, wherein said function provides an audio signal for broadcast on the user interface device.

25. The method of claim 17, wherein said advertising content provider comprises a plurality of content providers each providing different content and each having an

associated address, and wherein the character icon represents certain interests and information of the user, said method comprising the step of providing a list of content provider addresses to the user interface device based on said certain interests and information.

26. The method of claim 17, wherein said network comprises the Internet.
27. The method of claim 17, wherein said command originates at said service provider server.

28. The method of claim 17, wherein said step of establishing a first network connection further comprises the step of establishing a disk and execution monitor (DAEMON) connection between the user interface device and said service provider server.

29. The method of claim 17, wherein the enhancement authorization code comprises a visible icon portrayed on the user device.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein the enhancement authorization code comprises an icon which is portrayed on the user device upon the user satisfying a condition.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein the condition comprises one of selecting or entering, on the user interface device, a correct answer to a query posed by the content provider.

32. The method of claim 17, wherein said function directs a browser operated on the user interface device to locate a second content provider defined by an address specified by the function.

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33. A method of providing incentive for a user viewing content over a network, comprising the steps of:

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establishing a first network connection between a user interface device and a service provider server, the user interface device having a browser;

selecting a character icon from a plurality of character icons;

providing data to the user interface device in the form of a character icon representation corresponding to the selected character icon for display of the selected character icon on the user interface device;

establishing a second network connection between the user interface device and a content provider, said content provider providing data comprising enhancement authorization codes corresponding to at least one of the character icons in the plurality of character icons;

determining whether any of the enhancement authorization codes correspond to the selected character icon;

providing the ability to access said corresponding enhancement authorization codes to the user interface device if it is determined that at least one of the enhancement authorization codes corresponds to the selected character icon;

accessing the at least one corresponding enhancement authorization code from the user interface device;

notifying said service provider server when said at least one enhancement authorization code has been accessed; and

communicating a command over said first network connection in response to said notifying step to cause the a function to be performed on the user interface device.

34. The method of claim 33, wherein the at least one corresponding enhancement authorization code comprises a visible icon portrayed on the user interface device.

35. The method of claim 33, wherein the at least one corresponding enhancement authorization code comprises an icon which is portrayed on the user interface device upon the user satisfying a condition.

36. The method of claim 35, wherein the condition comprises one of selecting or entering, on the user interface device, a correct answer to a query posed by the content provider.

37. The method of claim 33, wherein said function directs a browser operated on the user interface device to locate a second content provider defined by an address specified by the function.

38. The method of claim 33, wherein said corresponding enhancement authorization code comprises a code represented by an invisible icon which is discoverable on the user interface device while the user interface device is in communication with said service provider server and upon performing an action on the user interface device.

39. A method of acquiring an enhancement function for a presently-selected character icon displayed on a user interface device, comprising the steps of:

- (a) accessing a service provider;
- (b) accessing a content provider;

(c) determining whether the accessed content provider is offering access to an enhancement function corresponding to the presently-selected character icon;

(d) providing, to the user interface device, an ability to acquire access to an enhancement function if it is determined that the enhancement function offered by the content provider corresponds to the presently-selected character icon;

(e) selecting an access code corresponding to the enhancement function by performing a selection function on the user interface device;

(f) adding an authorization indicator to a user enhancement file remotely located from the user device, the authorization indicator corresponding to the enhancement function; and

(g) indicating to a user viewing the user interface device that the enhancement function is available for use by the user.

40. The method of claim 39, wherein said step (e) of selecting comprises prompting a user with a query, and wherein said step (f) of adding comprises determining whether the query is successfully answered by the user.

41. The method of claim 39, further comprising the step of selecting the enhancement function from an index portrayed on the user device file for causing the presently-selected character icon to perform the selected enhancement function on the user device.

42. The method of claim 41, wherein said selected enhancement function causes the appearance of the presently-selected character icon to change while the function is activated.

43. The method of claim 41, wherein said selected enhancement function animates the presently-selected character icon while the function is activated.

Dale, 126 44. The method of claim 39, wherein said selected enhancement function provides an audio signal to the user device.

45 46. A method of acquiring enhancement functions for character icons, with each character icon having a corresponding attribute for manipulating the display of respective ones of said character icons on a first user device and a second user device, said first user device depicting a first icon having a first corresponding attribute, and said second device depicting a second icon having a second corresponding attribute, comprising the steps of:

- (a) accessing a service provider with said first and second user devices;
- (b) providing the user devices with addresses of content providers offering content having enhancement authorization codes corresponding to the first character icon and the second character icon;
- (c) accessing at least one of the addresses on each of said first and second user devices;
- (d) obtaining at least one enhancement authorization code on said first and second user devices upon access of the at least one of the addresses, said at least one enhancement authorization code corresponding to enhancement functions for the first and second character icons;
- (e) selecting the at least one enhancement authorization code by performing an action on the user devices;

(f) determining whether the at least one selected enhancement authorization code corresponding to the selected enhancement icons are authorized to be used with the presently-selected character icons displayed on said first and second user devices;

(g) adding an access code for the enhancement function to a first user enhancement file associated with a first user operating said first user device remotely located from said first user device if the enhancement function corresponding to the selected authorization code selected by the first user device is authorized to be used with the presently-displayed character icon on said first user device;

(h) adding an access code for the enhancement function to a second user enhancement file associated with a second user operating said second user device remotely located from said second user device if the enhancement function corresponding to the selected authorization code selected by said second user device is authorized to be used with the presently-displayed character icon on said second user device; and

(i) providing an indication to the first and second user devices that the selected enhancement functions have been added to the respective user enhancement files.

July 1, 126 46. The method of claim ~~46~~⁴⁵, wherein the first user can display the first character icon and said corresponding acquired enhancement to the second user on said second user device.

47. The method of claim ~~46~~⁴⁵, further comprising the step of transferring the access code contained in the first user enhancement file, to the second user enhancement file upon receipt of an authorization command provided by the first user and the second user.

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The method of claim 46, further comprising the step of selecting the enhancement function from an index portrayed on each of said first and second the user devices for causing at least one of the first and second character icons to perform the selected enhancement function on said user devices.

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The method of claim 46, wherein said first character icon represents certain interests and information of a first user, wherein said second character icon represents certain interests and information of a second user, and wherein the content offered by the content providers further comprises content corresponding to the certain interests and information of the first and second users.

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The method of claim 46, further comprising the step of transferring contents contained in the first user file to the second user file.

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The method of claim 46, wherein the at least one enhancement authorization code provides an instruction for directing a browser operable on one of the first and second user devices to locate a content provider other than a presently-located content provider.

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The method of claim 46, further comprising the step of (j) displaying the first character icon on the second user device and displaying the second character icon on the first user device.

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The method of claim 54, wherein said step (j) allows for the first and second character icons to simulate a battle.